DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 073 210 UD 013 288

AUTHOR Mech, Edmund V.
TITLE Achievement-Motivation Patterns Among Low-Income Anglo-American, Mexican-American, and Negro Youth.
PUB DATE 2 Sep 72
NOTE 7p.; paper presented at the American Psychological Association annual meeting, Honolulu, Hawaii, September 2, 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Academic Aspiration; Achievement Need; Achievement Tests; *Caucasian Students; Educational Diagnosis; Ethnic Groups; Low Income; *Mexican Americans; Minority Groups; *Negro Students; *Secondary School Students; Student Attitudes; *Student Motivation; Welfare Recipients

ABSTRACT

This project was designed to study the relationship between ethnic-racial factors and patterns of achievement motivation in males raised in low-income families. Anglo-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Negro Americans have been depicted as possessing achievement-orientation styles that are characteristially different from one another. The subjects were 605 males aged 13 to 16. Of this number, 425 were living in welfare families, and the balance were nonwelfare. Data collection was conducted with subjects individually. Interviewers were male college graduates in their midtwenties, and assigned to subjects on the basis of ethnic-racial matching. Of necessity, Mexican-American interviewers were bilingual. Indexes utilized were (a) level of aspiration; (b) Thematic-Apperception Test; (c) Edwards Personal Preference Scale; (d) performance inventory; (e) achievement tests; and, (f) grade-point-average. Compared with Anglo-American and Mexican-American subjects, Negro subjects ranked high on interview measures of achievement motivation but scored low on measures of achievement performance in school situations. In contrast, Mexican-American subjects did significantly less well on interview measures of achievement orientation but exceeded Negro and white subjects in school performance as measured by grade-point average. (Author/JM)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 073210

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Achievement-Motivation Patterns Among Low-Income Anglo-American, Mexican-American, and Negro Youth

by

Edmund V. Mech

Arizona State University

APA Division 8 Paper Session
Achievement-Related Motives and Behavior
September 2, 1972
Nautilus Room
Hilton Hawaiian Village
Honolulu

UD 013 250

Achievement-Motivation Patterns Among Low-Income Anglo, Mexican-American, and Negro Youth

Edmund V. Mech, Arizona State University

Abstract

The aim was to study the relationship between ethnic-racial factors and patterns of achievement-motivation in 605 adolescent males raised in low-income families. Indices utilized were: Level of Aspiration, Thematic-Apperception, Edwards Personal Preference Inventory, Performance, school achievement tests, and grade-point-averages. Negro Ss ranked high on cognitive measures of achievement-motivation but scored low on measures of achievement-performance. Mexican-American Ss did less well on interview measures of achievement-motivation but surpassed Negro and white Ss in grade-point-average. Negro Ss show a greater discrepancy between achievement-cognition and achievement-behavior than do Mexican-American and Anglo Ss.

ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION PATTERNS AMONG LOW-INCOME ANGLO-AMERICAN, MEXICAN-AMERICAN, AND NEGRO YOUTH

Edmund V. Mech
Arizona State University

The project aim was to study the relationship between ethnic-racial factors and patterns of achievement motivation in males raised in low-income families. It was hypothesized that ethnic-racial group affiliation significantly influences achievement-motivation pattern. Anglo-American, Mexican-American, and Negro Americans have been depicted as possessing achievement-orientation styles that are characteristically different from one another. Holtzman (1965), in comparing traditional Mexican-American family structure with that of Anglo-Americans, drew attention to the importance of the extended family, and the tendency of Mexican-American youth to interact with siblings, rather than with school or neighborhood children. Because of greater deference to family and kinship ties and limited emphasis on competition beyond the family, Mexican-American youth as a group are often characterized as likely to perform less well than Anglo-American or Negro youth on indexes of achievement motivation. Furthermore, McClelland (1961) contended that Negroes are apt to be deficient in the achievement motive because of strong mother-son dependency patterns which tend to produce obedience rather than the need to achieve. Despite theoretical conjecture about ethnic-racial differences in achievement orientation, a review of empirical studies produced little systematic data pertaining to Mexican-American or Negro motivational patterns. In the main, investigators have utilized white Ss and the tendency has been to assume that the concepts and findings apply equally to minority populations. Achievement-orientation data for Mexican-American populations is virtually nonexistent, while the limited information available that compares Negro and white Ss in need to achieve seems inconclusive. Katz (1967) stated,"one

may note that two decades of n Ach research have produced very little evidence that Negro children are lower on n Ach than white children [p. 144]." Accordingly the potential value of this study resides in the fact that Negro and Mexican-American populations constitute the nation's two largest disadvantaged minorities (Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970). Comparative data on the achievement-striving potential of Mexican-American and Negro Ss with that of Anglo-American Ss can be of use in compensatory education and economic development programs.

Method

The Ss were 605 males ranging in age from 13 to 16 yr. Of this number, 425 were living in welfare (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) families, and 180 were nonwelfare. Anglo-American, Mexican-American, and Negro Ss comprised the ethnic groups. Data collection was conducted with Ss individually. Interviewers were male college graduates in their mid-twenties, and assigned to Ss on the basis of ethnic-racial matching. Of necessity Mexican-American interviewers were bilingual. Indexes utilized were (a) level of aspiration (LOA); (b) Thematic-Apperception Test (McClelland TAT type stimuli were used); (c) Edwards Personal Preference Scale (EPPS, Motivation Scale); (d) Performance Inventory. In addition, (e) achievement test, and (f) grade-point-average information was extracted from school records.

Results

Level of Aspiration

Negro youth expressed higher levels of aspiration than did Anglo-American or Mexican-American youth. The Negro LOA mean was 9.9 points, in contrast to the Anglo-American and Mexican-American means of 8.7 points and 7.9 points, respectively. The F ratio for ethnic-group comparisons was statistically significant ($p < .001$). In response to the LOA item--

"How far do you hope to go in school?" approximately two of three Negro Ss indicated aspiring toward a college education, compared with one in two Anglo-American Ss and only one in three Mexican-American youth. Irrespective of ethnic grouping, welfare Ss tended to score lower on LOA than nonwelfare Ss. LOA scores of Mexican-American welfare Ss were significantly lower than Anglo-American or Negro welfare Ss.

Thematic Apperception Test

Anglo-American Ss scored highest with a mean of 9.4 points. Mexican-American Ss ranked second with a mean of 9.0 points, and Negro Ss scored significantly lower with a mean of 7.8 points. The F ratio for ethnic-group comparison was statistically significant from zero ($p < .001$).

Edwards Personal Preference Scale (Motivation Scale)

The F ratio for ethnic group comparison was suggestive only, reaching significance at the .07 level. On the average, Negro Ss scored higher on the EPPS Motivation Scale than did Mexican-American or Anglo-American Ss.

Performance Inventory

Significant ethnic comparisons were obtained, with Anglo-American and Negro Ss scoring statistically higher than Mexican-American Ss.

Achievement Tests

Analysis of standardized achievement test data indicated that on the average Stanine scores for Anglo-American and Mexican-American Ss were higher than Stanines obtained with Negro Ss.

Grade-Point Average

Mexican-American youth obtained significantly higher grade-point averages than did Negro and Anglo-American youth. The mean grade-point average was 2.9 for Mexican-American Ss, 2.5 for Negro Ss, and 2.5 for Anglo-American Ss.

Table 1 contains an overview of the mean scores for three ethnic-racial groups over six achievement-oriented measures. Four measures were

derived from interview data (LOA, TAT, EPPS, and Performance) and two were based on school performance records (achievement tests and grade-point average).

TABLE 1

Mean Scores for Anglo-American, Mexican-American, and Negro Subjects on Selected Indicators of Need to Achieve

Ethnic-racial group	Achievement-motivation indicator					
	Interview data				School data	
	LOA	TAT	EPPS	Performance	Achievement Tests	GPA
Anglo-American	8.7	9.4	11.8	10.5	4.6	2.5
Mexican-American	7.9	9.0	11.9	9.3	4.4	2.9
Negro	9.9	7.8	12.6	10.3	3.8	2.6

Note.--N = 605.

Discussion

Compared with Anglo-American and Mexican-American Ss, Negro Ss ranked high on interview measures of achievement motivation but scored low on measures of achievement performance in school situations. With the exception of the TAT measure, Negro Ss significantly exceeded Anglo-American and Mexican-American Ss on the LOA and EPPS measures, and exceeded Mexican-American Ss on the performance-striving index. In contrast, Mexican-American Ss did significantly less well on interview measures of achievement orientation but exceeded Negro and white Ss in school performance as measured by grade-point average. These data seem compatible with studies that show higher aspiration levels among Negro than among white Ss (Coleman, 1966). Although Negro youth tend to verbalize fairly high

motivational standards, as a group they seem to have difficulty converting cognitions into performance in school-structured achievement situations. In contrast, Mexican-American Ss appeared more conservative than Negro Ss in cognitive expressions of need to achieve, and in actual performance exceeded both Negroes and whites in grade-point achievement. Apparently verbal attitudes suggestive of motivation are far easier to learn than are the mechanisms needed to activate achievement cognitions into achievement behavior. Negro Ss on the average show a far greater discrepancy between achievement cognition and achievement behavior than do Mexican-American and Anglo-American Ss. Differential family patterns are proposed as one explanatory factor to account for ethnic variations in achievement motivation. Implications are derived for developing community resources aimed at helping disadvantaged youth to learn how to convert achievement-potential into performance.

References

Coleman, J. (with E. Campbell, C. Hobson, J. McPartland, A. Mood, F. Weinfeld, and R. York) Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1966.

Grebler, L., Moore, J. W., & Guzman, R. C. The Mexican-American people. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1970.

Holtzman, W. H. Cross cultural research on personality development. (Rep. No. 25) Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Institute of Latin American Studies, 1965.

Katz, I. The socialization of academic motivation in minority group children. Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1967, 15, 33-191.

McClelland, D. C. The achieving society. New York: Van Nostrand, 1961.